

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-01 AID-05 IO-10 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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R 220927Z JUL 75

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4852

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, LA, TH

SUBJ: PGNU CONCERN REGARDING LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND

1. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR MFA, DR. KITHONG VONGSAY, ASKED ME TO COME IN ON DIRECTION FROM PRIME MINISTER AT LAST CABINET MEETING. PRIME MINISTER WANTED TO ASK US ABOUT THE ARTICLE IN THE JULY 15 BANGKOK POST ALLEGING THAT THE U.S. HAD PROVIDED 150 MILLION DOLLARS FOR LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND. I FLATLY DENIED THE STORY. WE WERE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED.

I ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE RTG HAD HAD CONVERSATIONS WITH US ON THE SUBJECT BUT MY IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE MATTER WOULD BE HANDLED MORE IN AN INTE

- NATIONAL FRAMEWORK, PROBABLY THROUGH THE UNHCR.

2. KITHONG WAS RELIEVED TO HEAR OUR DENIAL BUT SAID THERE WERE MANY STORIES REGARDING THESE REFUGEES. THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR HAD "GOOD INFORMATION" TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE WAS A GOVERNMENT IN EXILE BEING CREATED IN

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KORAT. I ANSWERED THAT WE HAD NO SUCH INFORMATION BUT

G COULD ASSURE HIM THAT WERE SUCH A "GOVERNMENT" CREATED, IT WOULD RECEIVE NO U.S. SUPPORT. I RECALLED A SMILAR ALLEGATION MADE BY MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT SOME WEEKS AGO WHICH WAS QUITE SPECIFIC AND POINTED OUT THAT THE STORY WAS PROVED GROUNLESS.

3. I MADE POINT THAT RTG'S POLICY WAS TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH ALL ITS NEIGHBORS AND THAT IT WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THESE REFUGEES WHO WERE A SERIOUS BURDEN. I WAS CONVINCED THAT THE RTG WOULD ONLY BE TOO DELIGHTED TO HAVE ALL REFUGEES LEAVE THAILAND. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, MANY WERE GENUINELY AFRAID OF RETURNING AND I CITED EXAMPLE OF THAI DAM COUPLE WHO HAD WORKED FOR 10 YEARS IN COUNSELOR'S HOUSE AND, DESPITE EFFORTS TO PERSUADE THEM TO STAY, HAD LEFT FOR NONG KHAI. KITHONG SEEMED TO AGREE WITH ALL THESE POINTS BUT INDICATED A GOOD DEAL OF SUSPICION OF THAI MILITARY WHO HE SAID MIGHT SUPPORT A LAO REFUGEE EFFORT AGAINST LAOS. HE SAID THAT SOME OF THE THAI MILITARY WERE TAKING A HARD LINE ON THE PRESENT DISPUTE BETWEEN LAOS AND THAILAND OVER THE MEKONG INCIDENTS. I SIMPLY COMMENTED THAT I DID NOT KNOW WHAT ALL THAI MILITARY THOUGHT BUT IT WAS MY IMPRESSION, AT LEAST, THAT THAI MILITARY GENERALLY SUPPORTED THE RTG'S POLICY.

4. COMMENT: THE PGNU'S INQUIRY EMPHASIZES ITS CONTINUING CONCERN OVER LARGE NUMBER OF LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND AND IPTLARANOIC BELIEF THAT THEY ARE PLOTTING MISCHIEF AGAINST LAOS. THESE FEARS ARE NOT ENTIRELY GROUNLESS: THE SON OF THE PRIMIN, MANGKHALA SOUVANNA PHOUWA, WHO IS VERY DEPRESSED BY WHOLE SITUATION, TOLD ME THAT IF EFFORT WERE NOW MADE TO TAKE BACK LAOS, AT LEAST VIENTIANE, A LARGE PART OF THE POPULATION AND STUDENTS WOULD JOIN THE FAR TO THROW OUT THE PATHET LAO. I ANSWERED THAT THIS WOULD BE UTTER FOLLY: IT WOULD LEAD TO SEVERE LOSS OF LIFE AND BRING IN THE VIETNAMESE. HE AGREED RATHER SADLY. I WENT ON TO EMPHASIZE THAT U.S. WOULD IN NO WAY SUPPORT SUCH AN EFFORT. IN ANSWER TO MY FURTHER QUESTION, HE SAID HE WAS NOT AT ALL SURE THAT SOMETHING WAS NOT COOKING

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("MIJOTE") AMONG THE LAO REFUGEES IN THAILAND. WHILE MANGKHALA IS A GOOD FELLOW, HE IS NOT MATURE, HAS ALWAYS OVERRATED FAR CAPABILITIES AND IS IMPULSIVE. THE FACT THAT HE BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT IS HOWEVER REVEALING OF THE TEMPER OF MANY ELEMENTS HERE WHO ARE INCREASINGLY DISILLUSIONED BY DEVELOPING PATHET LAO CONTROLS AND RESULTING SITUATION.

CHAPMAN

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